

Well Baby Visit - Six Months

Date: _____ Weight: _____ Length: _____ Head size: _____

PARENTING AND BEHAVIORAL

- Encourage speech development by talking to your 6 month-old while dressing, bathing, feeding, playing, walking and driving.
- Begin playing social games such as pat-a-cake, peek-a-boo, so-big, etc. Encourage playtime alone, as well as with others. Play peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake, or play in front of a mirror.
- Begin to set some limits for future discipline by using distraction, reducing stimulation, and establishing routines.
- Establish a bedtime routine and other habits to discourage night awakening. Make sure your baby has learned self-soothing techniques by providing your child with the same transitional object, such as a stuffed animal, special blanket or favorite toy.
- Encourage play with age-appropriate toys. Babies like to bounce, swing, reach for you, pick up and drop objects, and bang things together. Unbreakable household objects such as plastic measuring cups, large wooden spoons, pots, pans, and plastic containers make great toys. Choose toys carefully, avoiding all toys with small pieces that can be easily removed and swallowed or have sharp edges. Toys that are rounded and made of wood or soft, but strong, plastic are usually safe. Now is the time for bath toys, squeaky toys, and plastic cups that fit inside each other.
- Shoes are not necessary at this age, except for show and to keep their feet warm.
- The 6-month-old infant likes to be with people and there is a sudden burst in awareness of his surroundings. The baby loves to play face to face with parents and begins to develop a sense of trust and the beginning elements of learning (through games like peek-a-boo).
- Parents need playtime, too. However, babies this age sometimes feel frightened when left with a new caretaker. If at all possible, try to get the baby to know the sitter with you present, before leaving her alone with the sitter for the first time.

DEVELOPMENT

Your 6 month old should be able to:

- Begin to speak single (hard) consonants, like "dada" (sorry moms, "dada" is almost always before "mama").
- Roll over both ways (front to back and back to front).
- Begin to look for a toy dropped out of sight.
- Pull to a sitting position without any head lag.
- Begin to "tripod" (sit with one hand on the ground for support), and soon may begin to sit without support.
- Continue to grasp and mouth objects, but now may be able to transfer small objects from one hand to another.
- Begin to rake at small objects. She cannot pick them up yet because her finger coordination is not yet precise enough.
- Show displeasure with loss of a toy or when left alone in a room.
- Recognize each parent and may even begin to show some stranger anxiety (recognize and be afraid of strangers).
- Make attempts to feed himself.
- Smile, laugh, squeal and begin to imitate sounds.
- Be content in a playpen for a while playing with one or two toys.
- Bear weight on her legs when held in a standing position (no, it will not make them bowlegged).
- Start scooting around on the floor.
- Bounce on your lap.
- Bring his feet to his mouth.
- Turn to your voice when she's called.
- Show feelings of pleasure and eagerness.
- Resist when you try to pull a toy away.

FEEDING

- Most babies double their birth weight in the first 5 to 6 months. They will not double their weight in the next six months as growth rate slows a little. Therefore, expect your baby's appetite to diminish a little in the next six months.
- Continue to breast feed or use iron-fortified formula for the first year of the infant's life, in order to have healthy bones and teeth, and to prevent anemia (low blood count).
- Feeding should be on a routine mealtime schedule, which hopefully coincides with the family mealtimes. Try scheduling four feedings per day.

- Continue introducing new solid foods, starting with yellow vegetables, and green vegetables, then fruits, and then meats. Your baby will let you know when and how much he wants to eat. Add one new food at a time to your baby's diet. Use a new food for a few days in a row before trying another. Watch for any reaction, such as a rash, vomiting, or diarrhea. If it occurs, stop the new food and wait one month before trying it again. Don't use mixed vegetables or jars with combinations of different foods until you have tried each food in the mixture one at a time.
- Your baby will begin to show preferences for some food and dislike for others as new solids are introduced.
- "Junior" foods and mashed table foods may be introduced between seven and eight months of age, even if your baby has no teeth. Expect your baby to spit them out at first because they have new textures. Don't assume that your baby dislikes the taste! Keep trying them! Foods should be cooked until very soft, with no additional salt, fats, or spices. Mash food or blend them in a blender. Examples include: cooked vegetables such as carrots, peas, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, squash, green beans, pinto beans, kidney beans; canned fruits, such as peaches, pears (mashed), applesauce; fresh fruit, such as mashed bananas; cereals, such as cooked cream of rice, cream of wheat, oatmeal.
- Now is the time to begin introducing a cup since it is important to try to eliminate all bottles around the baby's first birthday. The easiest way to do this is by taking advantage of the infant's natural curiosity and desire to imitate adults. Parents should buy two or three brightly colored plastic cups and begin drinking out of these new cups. Since the child will want the same thing the parents have, start giving your child her formula in an identical cup. The child will not be able to hold the cup by herself for some time. An alternate way of introducing the cup is to use one with a top and "feeding spout." While your child will not be using this type of cup when she gets older, there is less of a mess when she tips it over! Don't lose patience! If your 6-month-old shows little interest, try again in a day or two. Don't worry if it seems your baby is taking less liquid from the cup. This is normal since the growth rate slows down for a while.
- Your baby is developing new skills. Encourage your baby also to eat from a spoon and pick up finger foods to feed himself as his grasp gets better, as well as drink from a cup. Some examples of good finger foods are toast cut in strips, graham crackers, teething biscuits, softened cheerios, fresh bananas, peach or pear in small slices (if soft), cooked peas, cooked beans, cooked carrots. Feeding time will be messy! Don't scold or fuss; use newspaper or a plastic sheet under the high chair to help with clean up.
- Avoid giving foods that can cause choking. The most common foods babies aspirate are peanuts, popcorn, hot dogs or sausages, carrot sticks, celery sticks, whole grapes, raisins, corn, whole beans, hard candy, large pieces of raw vegetables or fruit, and tough meat. Always supervise your baby while eating and learn the proper emergency procedures for choking.
- If there is a strong family history of a food allergy, you might want to limit or avoid highly allergenic foods, such as eggs, strawberries, nuts/nut products, and seafood until your baby is older (most are safe to try at 1 year, but nuts should be avoided until 3 years).
- Resist the temptation for feeding your baby desserts, puddings, or creamed vegetables which have added milk solids, cornstarch, or sugar which your baby doesn't need. Sweets, punches, and soft drinks just help to spoil baby's appetite for more nourishing foods.
- When introducing juices, dilute them with the same amount of water to avoid causing diarrhea. Juice is not necessary at this age but may be started. Unsweetened, diluted apple or white grape juices are good ones to start with. Excess juice consumption leads to malnutrition, diarrhea, and cavities. Limit juice intake to 4 ounces per day.
- Continue to give the breast-feeding infant supplemental Vitamin D, and fluoride supplements, if your water supply is not fluoridated.
- If a caregiver is feeding your baby, go over the schedule with him to make sure he is feeding your infant the way you want.
- Because your baby is getting ready to cut teeth, she may be "gnawing" on everything.
- The following guidelines are suggestions for amounts of different foods:
 - ⇒ Breast Milk or Formula: 20 to 26 ounces each 24 hours, including what is used for cereal.
 - ⇒ Cereals: 4 to 6 tablespoons once a day. Add 1.5 tablespoons of formula, water, or expressed breast milk to each tablespoon of dry cereal.
 - ⇒ Vegetables: 4 to 5 tablespoons twice a day. You should start with strained and then advance to junior and mashed table foods.
 - ⇒ Fruits: 4 to 5 tablespoons twice a day. You should start with strained and then advance to junior and mashed table foods. Unsweetened 100% fruit juice (3 to 4 ounces once a day) may be used as a substitute for one fruit serving. Juice should be put in a cup, not a bottle.
 - ⇒ Meats: To begin at about 9 months of age. 4 to 5 tablespoons once a day. Begin with strained and then advance to junior and mashed table foods.

IMMUNIZATIONS

- Diphtheria, Tetanus, Acellular Pertussis (DTaP) Vaccine #3
- Prevnar (*Streptococcus pneumoniae*) Vaccine #3
- Ask your baby's doctor about possible side effects (fever, irritability, tenderness over the injection site).
- Make sure you get the Vaccine Adverse Reaction sheets on the immunizations your baby receives.

SAFETY

- Now that baby is crawling and exploring (or soon will be), parents must be aware of and limit the possibility of accidents in the home. No matter how safe we think our homes are, *REMEMBER*, babies need constant watching! The safest place is in their bed or playpen when parents are busy. Childproofing your home should take priority at this age.
- Now that your baby is more active, be careful not to leave him anyplace from which he can fall. Always keep one hand on your child and never turn your back, for even a second, when you put him on a sofa, bed, changing table or any other high place. Your baby always needs your full attention. Never leave your baby alone with a young sibling or pet.
- Continue to use an infant car seat that is properly secured at all times.
- Do not use an infant walker at any age. Walkers can tip over easily and carry a high risk of injury. Not only do they allow for falls down stairs, running into low tables, and tumbles out of the walkers themselves, which can lead to serious head injuries, they also can actually delay learning to crawl and walk. Play saucers are a safe alternative.
- If your home uses gas appliances, install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors.
- Continue to keep the baby's environment free of smoke, since smoke exposure can lead to increased risk of upper respiratory infections, ear infections, and burns. Keep the home and car nonsmoking zones.
- Get down on the floor and check for safety hazards at your baby's eye level.
- Never leave your baby alone in the bathtub or pool. Empty buckets, tubs, or small pools immediately after use. Ensure that swimming pools have a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- Avoid overexposure to the sun. Remember sunscreen (with an SPF of at least 15) for any outdoor activities to avoid painful, damaging sunburns.
- Do not leave heavy objects, or containers of hot liquids on tables with tablecloths that your baby may pull down.
- To avoid scalding, set your water heater at 120 degrees. Don't carry baby around while you drink hot drinks or cook.
- Place plastic plugs in electrical sockets, or place large pieces of furniture in front of outlets.
- Keep toys with small parts or other small, removable, or sharp objects out of reach. It is especially important to remind older siblings that they should always play with small objects out of reach of the baby.
- Keep all poisonous substances, medicines, cleaning agents, health and beauty aids, and paints and paint solvents in the original container, locked in a safe place, out of your baby's sight and reach. Never store poisonous substances in empty jars or soda bottles. Remove plants from reach too. In case of accidental ingestion, it is important to know exactly what your baby got into. Always call Poison Control (1-800-332-3073) if an accidental ingestion occurs.
- Install safety devices on drawers and cabinets where the infant may play.
- Install gates at the top and bottom of stairs, and place safety devices on windows.
- Lower the crib mattress.
- Avoid dangling electrical and drapery cords.
- Breakable objects on the floor and low tables should be removed.
- If you have a pet, keep his food and dishes out of your baby's reach. Also, never allow your child to approach a dog while the dog is eating. Even though your pet may seem quite harmless, animal behavior can be unpredictable; do not leave them alone with your child.
- Use the playpen as an "island of safety."
- Always use an approved infant car seat and never hold the baby on your lap when traveling. Once your baby weighs 20 pounds **and** is one year old, the car seat may be changed to face forward.
- Learn first aid and infant cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

SLEEP

- Encourage your baby to console himself by putting your child to bed awake, but drowsy.
- Try to establish a regular bedtime hour. Have a quiet time before bedtime. If you play actively just before bedtime, your baby will be much too stimulated to relax to go to sleep.
- No bottles in bed: they cause choking, ear infections, and cavities.
- Some 6-month-old babies decrease the length and/or frequency of naps.

- Due to the emergence of stranger anxiety, the 6-month-old baby may show resistance to going to sleep for naps and at night.
- Nighttime awakening can become a problem now. If your baby wakes and cries out, check on her safety and comfort, but leave her in bed. Keep the visit brief. Do not encourage play. Don't give juice or milk. Do not allow your baby into bed with you to quiet her. Babies must learn to put themselves back to sleep.

STOOLING

If baby eats at regular times, her bowels may move at regular times, too. Her bladder is getting bigger and can hold more urine at a time. Your baby may wet less often, but more each time.

TEETHING

- Teething does not cause high fever or watery diarrhea. It may cause drooling, looser stools, or fussiness.
- Tylenol infant drops in the appropriate amount may be helpful. Over-the-counter medications for teething may help, although having your baby chew on a cold or frozen teething ring or crushed ice in a washcloth may be of more benefit for your baby's discomfort.
- When your baby gets his first tooth, you should begin brushing his teeth with a toothbrush. Toothpaste is not necessary right now.
- Your baby may develop one or more teeth by the 9-month checkup. Don't worry if teething is delayed as every child has his own timetable for teething. The process of getting teeth can be difficult or easy and there is no reason why one baby frets and drools during tooth eruption and another sails through it without a whimper. Ask your baby's doctor what you can do if teething gives your little one a problem.

WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR

- Anything that bothers you!
- Poor weight gain
- Your baby shows little interest in social interaction, avoids eye contact, and smiles infrequently
- Your baby seems stiff or floppy
- Your baby's head falls backwards when she is pulled to a sitting position
- Your baby only uses one hand to reach
- Your baby makes no attempt to roll over
- There is no infant squealing or laughing
- Eyes are crossed most of the time
- You have not seen any developmental changes since the last checkup

NEXT APPOINTMENT

- At 12 months old
- Call the appointment line 2-3 weeks in advance to set up an appointment

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- Tricare Nurse Advice Line: 1-888-887-4111
- Nurse Triage Line 556-CARE
- Clinic appointment desk: 264-5000
- Clinic phone number: 556-1140/1141
- Emergency: 911
- Poison Control 1-800-332-3073